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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: PENTAGON'S REPORT ON CHINA'S MILITARY
POWER, U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS, TAIWAN'S WHO BID

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage May 30 on President Chen Shui-bian's remarks at the video conference with the National Press Club (NPC) Tuesday; on the 2008 presidential election; and on other local issues. The pro-independence "Liberty Times" ran a banner headline on page two that said "Bian Is Concerned That It Will Challenge Taiwan-U.S. Relations If [the Party] Upholding Ultimate Unification [with China] Grasps Political Power [in 2008]." The pro-unification "United Daily News," on the other hand, front-paged an exclusive news story, with the headline "During a Visit to Taiwan, West Point Cadets Reportedly Involved in Sex Scandal."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" commented on the Pentagon's "Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2007" report and Taiwan's crisis of declining military power. A "Liberty Times" editorial, however, said the Pentagon's report has reminded the world of the potential threat of China's military expansion. An op-ed in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" said "China is more likely to respect the U.S. if Washington sticks to its obligations and defends its interests - economic and strategic. And it would be more likely to respect Taipei if the latter shows its determination to defend itself." With regard to President Chen's remarks with the NPC, a "United Daily News" analysis criticized Chen for misinterpretation of the Taiwan Relations Act. The "Taipei Times," meanwhile, carried an article by Taiwan's minister of the Department of Health on Taiwan's bid to join the World Health Organization using the name Taiwan. End summary.

¶3. Pentagon's Report on Chinese Military Strength

A) "Crisis of Taiwan's Declining Military Power"

The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] editorialized (5/28):

"... The United States' latest report on Chinese military power has explicitly cautioned that the growth of China's military power has surprised the United States. Given the unprecedentedly cold relationship between Taiwan and the United States, how can people not feel worried about the future of Taiwan's security? ... It is equally dangerous if people either assume naively that China will not attack Taiwan or are so accustomed to the illusion of peace [in the Taiwan Strait]. If the United States' will grows fragile; its military strength becomes relatively weaker; or it is under severe political or military restraint; or if Washington acquiesces to [a Chinese] attack against Taiwan, China will launch attack against the island without any hesitation. [Should this happen,] Taiwan will immediately become a killing field..."

B) "The United States' 'Report on China's Military Power' Reminds

the World That They Need to Pay Attention to the Threat of China's Military Expansion"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 500,000] editorialized (5/29):

"... Immediately following the conclusion of the second China-U.S. Strategic Economic Dialogue, which hardly yielded any results, and the second day after Chinese Vice Premier Wu Yi left Washington, the U.S. Department of Defense released its 'Military Power of the People's Republic of China' report, which warned of the potential threat to neighboring countries caused by the rise of China's military power. The significance of such a report is worth contemplation; it clearly indicates that, while the entire world is concerned about the rise of China's economy, the United States is more alarmed by China's military expansion and the great impact it will have on the peace and stability of the world. In other words, this report seems to be reminding the world that the rapid growth of China's economy in recent years has not only altered the domain of world economics but has also reversed the strategic position of global geopolitics, making China possibly the seed of disaster that will endanger the world. ...

"In other words, the United States has gradually recognized China's intent to wage war and has to put its concern into words and informed the world's people who are confused by the false appearance of the rise of China's economy. Now that the United States' report on China's military power has pointed out some of the facts, will a majority of the countries [in the world] choose to continue tolerating evil, refuse to face the truth and consequently bring calamity on themselves, or will they show strong support to the Taiwan people, who have justifiable interests, and stop China's plan for action as early as possible, so as to safeguard world peace? This is a test to the wisdom of people in the world."

C) "US Should Ignore the 'China Lobby'"
POWER, U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS, TAIWAN'S WHO BID

John Tkacik, senior research fellow at the Heritage Foundation, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (5/30):

"... The Pentagon report also warns that the military balance in the Taiwan Strait is 'continuing to shift in the mainland's favor.' ... China's naval, air and amphibious forces are also modernizing. Reagan's diaries send a clear message from 25 years ago to Washington and Taipei: Now, as 'more sophistication is needed, we'll upgrade' Taiwan's defense equipment. Reagan's instincts were right. The administrations in Taipei and Washington should ignore the 'China Lobbies' in their respective bureaucracies and do what needs to be done to defend Taiwan and the US. China is more likely to respect the US if Washington sticks to its obligations and defends its interests - economic and strategic. And it would be more likely to respect Taipei if the latter shows its determination to defend itself."

13. U.S.-China-Taiwan Relations

"Applicability Doesn't Mean Recognition; Bian Misinterprets the Taiwan Relations Act"

Washington correspondent Vincent Chang noted in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (5/30):

"... Chen was obviously not reconciled to the fact that Washington voted against [Taiwan's] WHO bid and thus decided to teach the U.S. government 'a good lesson' over the provisions of the Taiwan Relations Act. But [Chen's remarks] have shown certain inconsistencies and mistakes. Having had nearly thirty years of pragmatic experience, the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) has been widely recognized as a law of wisdom in dealing with cross-Strait issues. It has been cited by the U.S. Government as the cornerstone of U.S. policy in dealing with cross-Strait and Taiwan-U.S. relations. The spirit of 'strategic ambiguity' as shown in the TRA has offered U.S. policy implementers ample leeway and flexibility when they were engaged in discussions and faced the substantive challenges of cross-Strait issues.

"But it is the United States' TRA, not Taiwan's. As the president of Taiwan, Chen surprisingly claimed that, during the remainder of his term, 'he must build on the United States' Taiwan Relations Act strongly to substantiate the sovereignty, dignity and security of our nation.' What is self-contradictory here is: Doesn't Taiwan, a sovereign state, as [it is] called by Bian, have its own laws to constitute or strengthen its sovereignty? Surprisingly, is the U.S. law the guideline Chen will follow during the last year of his term? Chen can be so courageous when facing China, but does he have to belittle himself this way when facing the United States? ..."

14. Taiwan's WHO Bid

"Latest WHO Bid Created True Debate on Taiwan"

Hou Sheng-mou, Taiwan's minister of the Department of Health, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (5/27):

"... The WHO membership application may be Taiwan's most important moment in the international limelight this year, but Taiwan's medical professionals never cease to see the attempts to become a contributor to international health as a duty and an honor. The best example of this attitude is the Taiwan International Health Action, which was established last year. Although the curtain has fallen on this year's WHA, Taiwan's medical professionals and the public at large will continue to move forward, manifesting the concern of the Taiwanese people and the professionalism and advancement of Taiwan's health professionals by sharing this concern and professionalism with people around the world, while at the same time working for Taiwan's acceptance into the WHO next year."

YOUNG